

## DALE FARM: JUDGEMENT RESERVED

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From: "Roma Virtual Network" &lt;romale@zahav.net.il&gt;

To: Roma\_Daily\_News@yahooogroups.com

Cc: "Dale Farm" &lt;dale.farm@btinternet.com&gt;

## DALE FARM : JUDGEMENT RESERVED ON HOMELESS

By Grattan Puxon

Other judgements may be made on the conduct of Basildon council in relation to its Gypsy minority. But for the time being judge Peter Dedman has reserved his in the cases before him from Dale Farm at Southend County Court.

Having astonished all with a ban on evidence about land offered to Basildon for the Dale Farm homeless by a government agency, Judge Dedman last week postponed his ruling on whether the council ought in effect to let Travellers continue their communal life by granting planning permission for them to move peacefully to another location.

The alternative, favoured by Basildon's legal team, is to press an elderly couple, dependent on adult children for care, to move into a council flat. Their daughter says they would not survive the isolation. But Basildon says if they don't like bricks and mortar they must face eviction from their mobile home at Dale Farm, along with ninety other families, and take their chances on the road.

What those chances are was made clear earlier in the month when Essex police repeatedly used draconian powers under s61 of the Criminal Justice Act to move on families evicted by Basildon's bailiffs from Hovefields Avenue, two miles distant from the large Dale Farm settlement.

That action, now the subject of a formal complaint, was taken without the required welfare checks, despite police officers being informed of the presence of two pregnant mothers and a lad with learning difficulties. The families also included a number of small children who had just been through the trauma of seeing their homes bulldozed.

## MILLIONS SQUANDERED

Tony Ball, Tory leader of Basildon, faced with a demand to make drastic expenditure cuts, admits the council is now strapped for money to complete its ethnic-cleansing of *illegal* Gypsies from the district. It has already spent £2m on administration and legal costs, and the small-scale evictions at Hovefields, priced at £150,000 each.

He has Constant & Co under a £2.9m contract but cannot now meet the police bill for accompanying the bully-boy bailiffs on their punitive expedition into Dale Farm. Because of expected resistance from families desperate to save their homes, police say the operation could last three weeks and cost up to £10m for policing alone.

Seems clear Tony is not able, or unwilling, to add up his figures. For half that sum those made homeless could move to land offered by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Wanting matters to progress sensibly, Dale Farm Housing Association is seeking planning permission to build a mobile-home park *itself* on HCA land at Pound Lane, Laindon. It would, of course, cost nothing to leave families at Dale Farm, where they have provided homes for themselves by clearing a former scrap-yard.

Instead Tony has asked his Tory pal John Baron MP to seek a £10m loan from Communities secretary Eric Pickles to finance his eviction venture. One wonders if even local supporters of the neo-fascist British National Party will applaud this epic squandering of scarce public money.

That question is also being put to Theresa May at the Home Office. She has been approached for similar funding by Essex police themselves. The Government is thus in a position, simply by refusing money, to respond positively to the UN request to stop the Dale Farm eviction.

However, the danger arises that the fate of Dale Farm will be turned from a homeless to a typical Tory *law-and-order* issue, where the Eton boys having won control of the state feel they must at all costs crush the aspirations of Travellers to adopt a semi-settled life and send their children to school.

If that happens, we'll know Sarkozism has crossed the Channel and we must take to the barricades.

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